Research Synopsis

Title: Afghan-American Experience in Khaled Hosseini's Fiction: A Perspective on Literary Historiography

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Statement of the Problem:

In the contemporary geo-political scenario of the world, the dimension of colonialism has been shifting continuously with the various new offshoots of colonialism. In the neo-liberal locus of the contemporary world, the small third world nations are becoming objects of rampant colonialism through the neo-liberal discourses spearheaded by the Western nations especially US. Consequently, in this new 'post post colonial' regime, it can be observed that there is an indirect kind of occupation though the various forms of colonialism threatening the indignity of the small nations of the Global South. In the light of the above context, the conditions of present Afghanistan can be also visualized that how this small nation of South Asia and also of the Central Asia becomes a war victim which is aroused out of the external conflicts and the neoliberal economic policies of the Global north nations like US.

In this contemporary world politics, the various neo-colonial agencies have thus expanded their territorial regime through the various offshoots of neo-colonialism--- economic, cultural, and epistemological and others thereby subjugating the indigenous rights. The process of globalization is also criticized as westernization due to US's hegemonic expansion of various forms of colonialism thereby threatening the indigenous identity. Khaled Hosseini is an internationally acclaimed novelist. He is recognized as an Afghan-American novelist as by birth he belongs to Afghanistan and at present he is a citizen of US. Hosseini wrote his debut novel *The Kite Runner* (2003) as a citizen of America. In fact, he wrote all his novels as a national of US. His other noted published novels are *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), *An the Mountain Echoed* (2013), *and Sea Prayer* (2018). It is important to note that despite of Hosseini's present status of citizenship and identity as an American, he is more recognized as an Afghan writer due to his depiction of the various socio-political conditions of Afghanistan in his novels. Again, his novels are also written in the backdrop of childhood memory during his stay in Afghanistan. But the condition is that in all of his novels, we can observe a dominant presence of America. In his texts, although Afghanistan is present vividly, but simultaneously American presence is dominant both consciously and unconsciously in the narratives of the novelists. In fact, the

novelist is not able to criticize the negative role of America in Afghanistan not in any part of the texts.

Exploring various experiences in the war torn Afghanistan, Khaled Hosseini, a prominent novelist come up with his well known novels in which he intertwines his personal memory of the land Afghanistan with a broader perspective to showcase the problems faced by the land Afghanistan. But it must be argued here that Hosseini's texts are conditioned by an American hegemonic presence which underpins serious questions on his writings on the conditions of Afghanistan. Although, Hosseini's novels are grounded on the plots of Afghanistan and due to his belongingness to two nations, he is known as Afghan-American novelist, my argument is that Hosseini in his novels more tangibly focuses on the American presence in Afghanistan in a positive way whereas, if we look at the socio historical conditions of Afghanistan, it can be seen that America is occupying an indirect kind of colonialism in Afghanistan. Hence, in my research thesis, an attempt will be made to reconfigure the Afghan-American experience reflected in the Hosseini's fiction. In this way, I want to argue that Hosseini figures more as an American writer as his novels incorporates dominantly American discourses and thus his place can be situated in the American literary history.

Literary Historiography is a mode of studying the history of literature. It is a kind of methodology to observe and analyse the history of literature of a particular geographical space. Just as historiography studies the process of history making, literary historiography also concentrates its study on the process of making literary history. Anne Marie Musschoot observes how the "New historians, then, being cut off from the assumption of ever being able to reconstruct the past as it was really was , turn to narrative techniques in order to present possible reconstructions of the past as it may or could have been" (144) and in the same course, he also defines Literary History as "of course ,being just another form of historiography, i.e. of reconstructing the past and of storytelling ,may provide us in due course with the right –though temporary and provisional –answer to that question (152). Musschoot suggests that Literary Historiography just like New Historicism is a process of making history of literature and it has the potentiality to reconstruct the literary representations of past thereby revisiting on that literary pieces and analysis. The notion of Literary Historiography has thus a very close

association with the method of New Historicism and the problematization of the idea of literary historiography also involves the theoretical apparatuses of New Historicism. M R Habib writes:

> "The New Historicism which arose in the 1980s reacted against both the formalist view of the literary text as somehow autonomous and Marxist views which ultimately related texts to the economic infrastructures. It saw the literary texts as somehow unique but as a kind of discourse situated within a complex cultural discourses-religious, political, economic, and aesthetic-which both shaped in and, in their turn, were shaped by it. If there was anything new about this procedure, it was its insistence, drawn from Foucault and Post structuralism that 'history' itself is a text, an interpretation, and there is no single history (761).

Thus, it can be understood that New Historicism underpins on foregrounding the history of literary texts which can be seen in the web of some complex cultural discourses rather than seen them in formal structures of literary texts. Literary Historiography also explores these 'cultural discourses' of literature and the formation of literary history from those literary representations. However, traditional literary historiography involves with also the study of genres and figures as Habib points out that New Historicism also "broke away from any literary historiography based on the study of genres and figure (761). In the Postmodern era, the new modes of Literary Historiography however debunks the earlier literary pattern of canon formation in literary history based on some genres and figures and foregrounds on analyzing literary works and canon from the perspective of multilayered understanding of discourses. David Parkins therefore argues that one important part of literary history is revisiting the past (21). Hence, the varied components of contemporary memory theory are also very important in literary historiographic understanding of texts. In this present research work also, an attempt will be made to read the texts of Hosseini from the perspective of Literary Historiography thereby debunking Hosseini's present position as an Afghan-American novelist and to situate his position in American literary history because of his celebrating nature of being American.

Review of Literature:

As Khaled Hosseini is generally known as Afghan-American novelist and his novels depict Afghan conditions explicitly, the understating of the contemporary history and socio-political conditions are important. Peter Tomsen in his book *The Wars of Afghanistan* (2011) provides a very detail analysis on the terrorism, tribal conflicts and the failures of great powers in America. Masood Khalili in the book *Whispers of War* (2017), as an Afghan freedom fighter, accounts lived experiences of the detail of war against Soviet Invasion in the nation Afghanistan. Sandy Gall, a Scottish Journalist in his book *WAR against the TALIBAN*: *when it went wrong in Afghanistan* (2012), has made a journalistic account on the various socio-political upheavals and consequences of the prolong war against Taliban in Afghanistan. Richard Gray in his well researched book *History of American Literature* (2011) discusses and incorporates various new forms and writers of American literature but one must argue that he fails to be democratic to include Asian American writers like Hosseini. As Hossini is one of the internationally best seller novelists, many research works have been done on Hosseini's novels. Many research works have been done on the conflicts of war depicted in the fictional works of Hosseini. Works on the conditions of Afghan women as depicted in the novels of Hosseini have also been done. After doing initial literary survey, I have confronted with some important research works on Hosseini's novels. Ruzmatova Dilnoza , a PhD scholar in her article " Diaspora Features in Khaled Hossein's Novels", discusses main literary features of Afghan diaspora. Haghighi Hanieh (2017), in his Ph,D did research on "Trauma, fantasy, and subjectivity formation through Lacanian approach in Khaled Hosseini's novels", observes the Lacanian subjectivity through trauma study in the novels of Hosseini. Mary F Angello, Rees H Todd , Bolnale and Thomas A in their paper " Afghanistan and Multiculturalism in Khaled Hossei'ni's novels: A Study of Place and Diversity", analyse the multicultural aspects of Khaled Hosseini's novels. Rachel Blumenthal in the essay "Looking for Home in the Islamic Diaspora of Ayyan Hirsi Ali, Azar Nafisi, and Khaled Hosseini", discusses these three writers only as diasporic writers and about their problems of alienation. Through the initial literary review, it is observed that no work has been done yet on the Afghan-American Experience on Hosseini's fiction. Again, there is not at all literary historiographic analysis on the novels of Hosseini. Thus, the present research has the potentiality to give a fresh idea of looking Hosseini's fiction from a completely different and new perspective as well as argument.

Hypothesis:

The work will be carried out on the assumption that Hosseini's fictional works are conditioned by the politics of dominant American presence which influences the Afghan space. It can be argued that Hosseini's novels showcases the Afghan historical and material conditions only through a telescopic view of American perspective as American presence overshadows the Afghan conditions. Hence, it can be established that Hosseini is a more American writer than the Afghan and Hosseini as a novelist can be situated in American literary history. Thus, the traditional historiography in Hosseini's texts can be dismantled through the understanding of new perspective of Literary Historiography which situates Hosseini as an Afghan-American novelist represented by American discourses.

Objectives:

1. To locate the nationalistic position of Khaled Hosseini and to situate his American identity.

2. Questioning and situating Hosseini's space in American literary canon.

3. To look at the material conditions of Hosseini's Texts.

4. To bring out the spatial dynamics in Khaled Hosseini's Fiction.

Methodology:

To carry out the research work, analytical method will be followed. In order to pinpoint the research issues, the various theories of Literary Historiography, Neo-colonialism and de-colonial theories will be followed.

Organization of Chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

This is an introductory chapter. This chapter will introduce Khaled Hossini as a novelist. The chapter will also try to provide a general introduction of Hosseini's fictional works. Again, the

chapter will also provide a problematization of the research work with the help of theories like neo-colonialism, literary historiography and de-colonial theories.

Chapter II: New Internationalism, 9/11 Discourse and South Asian English Fiction

This chapter is a background chapter. The chapter is going to provide a background of contemporary South Asian Fiction in relation to the idea of New Internationalism and 9/11 discourse. After analysing contemporary South Asian Fiction, the fictional works of Hosseini will be also interpreted in the context of New Internationalism and 9/11 discourse.

Chapter III: Hosseini and American Literary Canon

This is the core chapter of the research work. The chapter will try to situate Hosseini's position in American literary canon by analyzing the issues of dominant American presence in his novels. While doing that various tools of Literary Historiography will be problematised.

Chapter IV: Material Conditions of Hossein's Texts

This chapter is an attempt to analyze the various material conditions of Hosseini's Texts. The chapter will try to focus both on Afghan and American material conditions which act as backgrounds of Hosseini's novels. In this chapter, the aspects of popular cultures like the various forms of adaptations will also be taken into consideration while making the discussion.

Chapter V: Spatial Dynamics in Hosseini's Texts

This chapter is devoted to bring out the relationship among the geographical spaces of the various places of the world as reflected in Hosseini's fiction. The chapter with the apparatuses of various spatial theories attempts to bring forward the various spaces which are not only physical but also mental space.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

The concluding chapter is a summary of the findings of the research work and it will try to validate the hypothesis of the work.

Significance of the Study:

The present research work entitled as “Afghan-American Experience in Khaled Hosseini’s Fiction: A Perspective on Literary Historiography” is significant in the contemporary geo-political scenario of the world. The study can bring to the fore a completely fresh analysis on the fictional works of Hosseini thereby reconfiguring the issues of Afghan-American Experiences in Hosseini’s fiction. The research work will look Hosseini’s novels critically by questioning his present belongingness as an Afghan writer and attempts to situate Hosseini’s position in American literary history. The present study has relevance internationally as it underpins the contemporary geo-political power politics of the powerful nations of the Global North like US. While analysing Hosseini’s novels, a critical understanding of war politics of the world especially from the era of cold-war to post 9/11 scenario is important and hence the study acclaims an international relevance.

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